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DE RUEHAH #1265 2780330  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 050330Z OCT 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3573  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE  
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3464  
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5752  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3328  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3995  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3972  
RHMCSUU/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 001265

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, SCA/PPD,

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: BERDIMUHAMEDOV'S "OPEN" PRESS CONFERENCE

11. (U) SUMMARY: On October 1, President Berdimuhamedov held his first "open" press conference with state-run and foreign media. The event was heavily controlled and, like most media events in Turkmenistan, designed to develop the President's image. Journalists were forced to repeat questions handed to them by the President's handlers, and only the positive portions of the conference were featured in the state-run media. END SUMMARY.

YOU WON'T ASK OUR QUESTIONS, YOU DON'T COME INTO THE ROOM

12. (SBU) The format of the press conference was designed in advance and rigidly monitored. Only credentialed members of the media were allowed to attend, thereby excluding any problematic RFE/RL journalists. In total, the President answered ten questions, five from the local state-run media, two from Turkish press agencies, one from the AP, one from AFP, and one from the Russian outlet "Turkmenistan." The questions (and presumably the answers) were prepared in advance.

13. (SBU) Upon entering the room, a state media representative handed each of the foreign stringers a specific question to ask. All of the foreign journalists that inquired whether they would be allowed to ask different or additional questions were ignored during the conference and not provided microphones. When the Reuters reporter refused to ask his "question," he was escorted from the room.

14. (SBU) COMMENT: This is Berdimuhamedov's first press conference since UNGA and reportedly the first he has done in such an "open" format since taking over as President. However, it is hard to have a press conference be open when control is so important. END COMMENT.

CURRAN